

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Carlsbad Field Office Bureau of Land Management July 8 and 9, 2014

Aaron Stockton – Natural Resource Specialist

Owen Lofton - Planning & Environmental Specialist

Workshop Purpose

- Review BLM's lands with wilderness characteristic's policy and inventory process
- Disclose findings of the inventory
- Results of the process and how applied to LWC management in the upcoming plan revision

Agenda

- Welcome
- Brief presentation describing LWC inventory and evaluation process
- Circulate among resource specialists stations and discussions with resource specialists.
- Capture public feedback on data presented
- Meeting conclusion

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended

• "Section 201 of FLPMA requires the BLM to maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resources and other values, which includes wilderness characteristics. It also provides that the preparation and maintenance of the inventory shall not, of itself, change or prevent change of the management or use of public lands..."

LWC Inventory Process

• The primary function of an inventory is to determine the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics.

Process

- The BLM must document existing conditions as opposed to potential future conditions.
- Previous inventory
- The BLM may conduct the inventory using available information (e.g., existing maps, photos, records related to range projects, monitoring data) and will field check the information as necessary. This wilderness characteristics inventory process directive does not mean that the BLM must conduct a completely new inventory and disregard the inventory information that it already has for a particular area. Rather, the BLM must ensure that its inventory is maintained.

Process

- This evaluation may be based on relevant information available in the office (prior BLM inventories, interdisciplinary team knowledge, aerial photographs, field observations, maps, etc.). Field checking may also be needed.
- The BLM will document the rationale for the findings, make the findings available to the public, and retain a record of the evaluation and the findings as evidence of the BLM's consideration.

Process

- In order for an area to qualify as lands with wilderness characteristics, it must possess sufficient size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities for either solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.
- In addition, it may also possess supplemental values

Size

- 1) Roadless areas with over 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM lands. State or private lands are not included in making this acreage determination.
- Roadless areas of less than 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM lands where any one of the following apply:
- a) They are contiguous with lands which have been formally determined to have wilderness or potential wilderness values, or any Federal lands managed for the protection of wilderness characteristics. Such lands include:
- (1) designated Wilderness,
- (2) BLM Wilderness Study Areas,
- (3) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service areas Proposed for Wilderness Designation,
- (4) U.S. Forest Service (FS) Wilderness Study Areas or areas of Recommended Wilderness, and
- (5) National Park Service (NPS) areas Recommended or Proposed for Designation.

Naturalness

- The area must appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, and any work of human beings must be substantially unnoticeable.
- Document noticeable human impacts within the area. If several minor impacts exist, summarize their cumulative effect on the area's degree of apparent naturalness.
- Some human works are acceptable so long as they are substantially unnoticeable. Avoid an overly strict approach to assessing naturalness. For example, the presence of a water trough is a relatively minor human impact on naturalness, and may be considered substantially unnoticeable.
- Human impacts outside the area will not normally be considered in assessing naturalness of an area. If, however, a major outside impact exists, it should be noted in the overall inventory area description and evaluated for its direct effects on the area.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation

• The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both elements, nor does it need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre, even when an area is contiguous to lands with identified wilderness characteristics

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation.

- Determine whether or not the area offers an outstanding opportunity for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.
- Some examples of primitive and unconfined types of recreation include hiking; backpacking; fishing; hunting; spelunking; horseback riding; climbing; river running; cross-country skiing; snowshoeing; dog sledding; photography; bird watching; canoeing; kayaking; sailing; and sightseeing for botanical, zoological, or geological features.

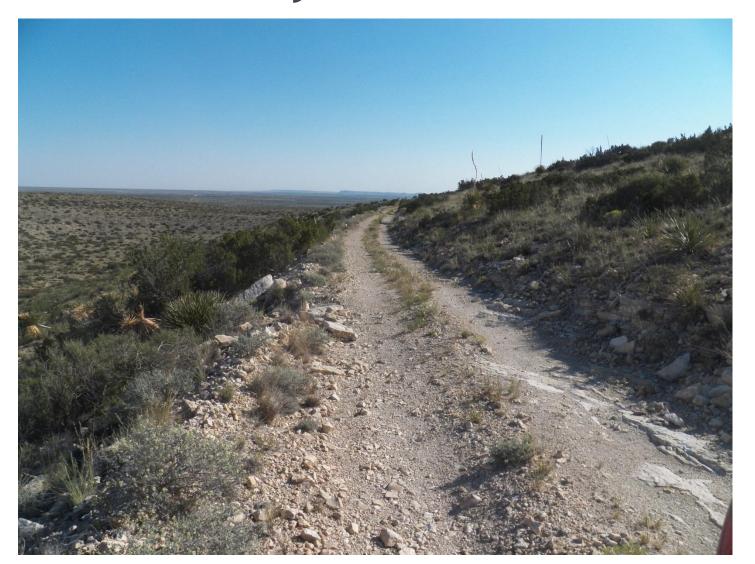
Route Inventories

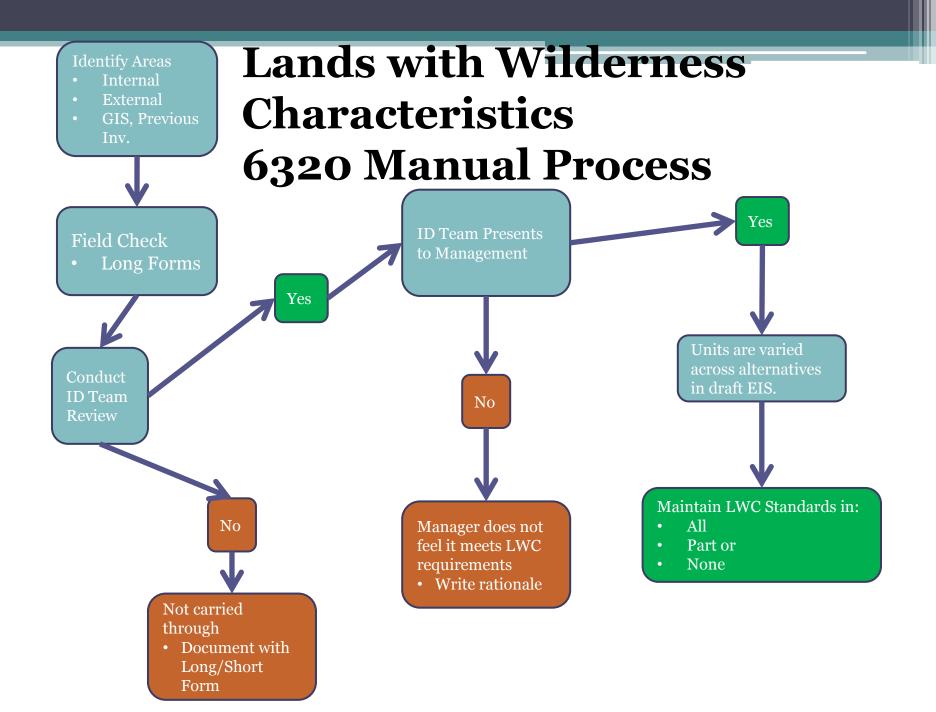
- "For the purpose of inventorying wilderness characteristics only, the BLM will continue to base the "road" definition on FLPMA's legislative history.."
 - Improved AND maintained
 - Mechanical means
 - Relatively regular and continuous use

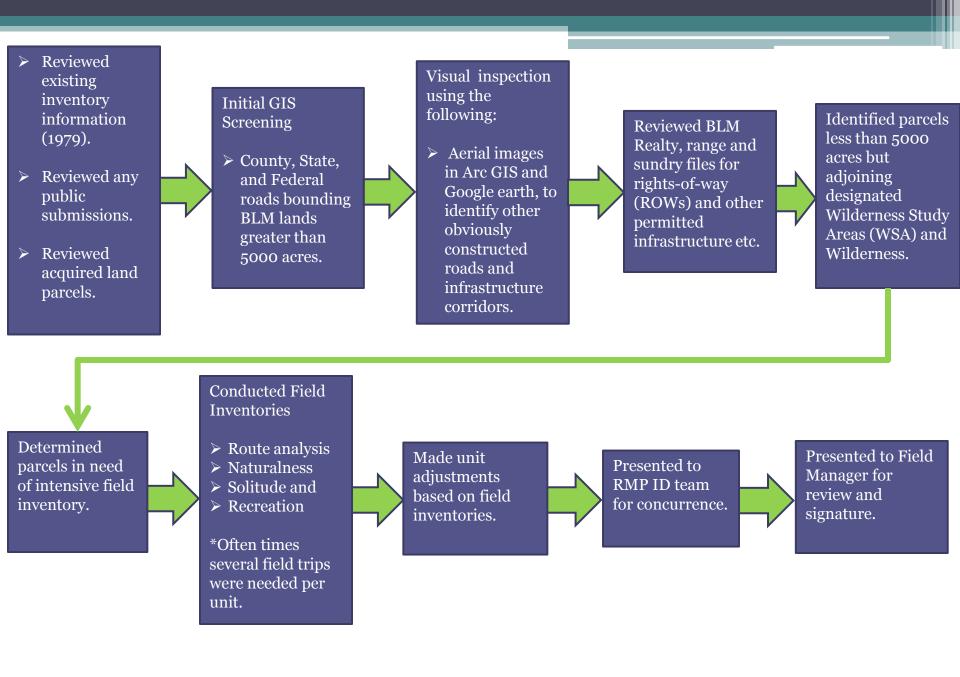
Two Track Trail

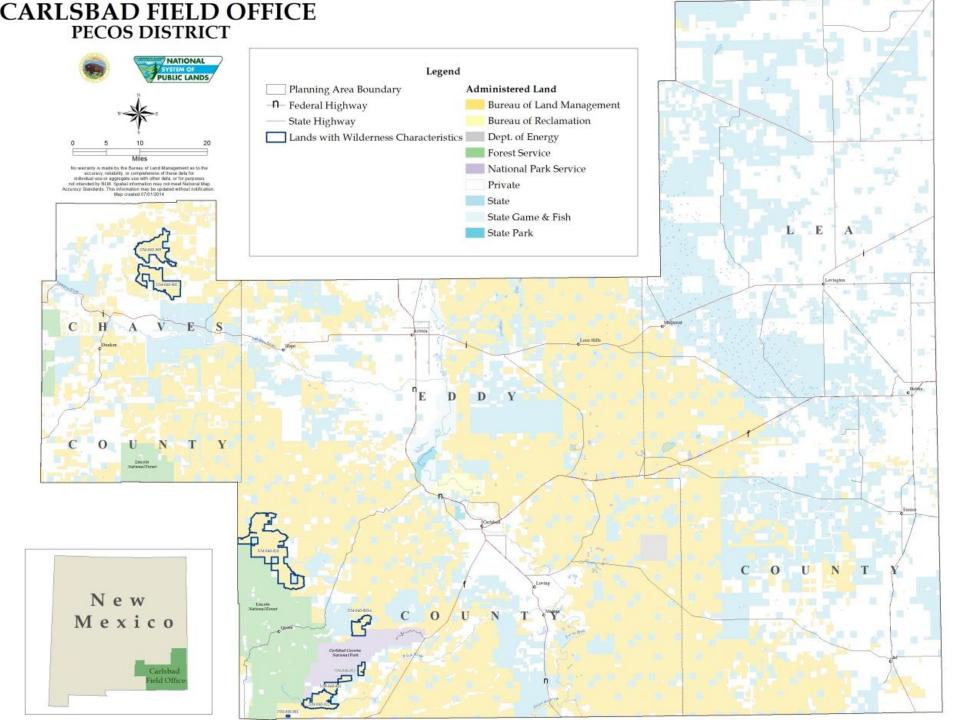


Constructed by mechanical means









LWC Unit No.	Acres
NM-060-801	82
NM-060-803A	3,547
NM-060-810	26,669
NM-060-902	9,834
NM-060-909	9,130
NM-060-922	5,751
NM-060-815	3,988
Total Surface Acreage	58,001

RMP Overview

- Performed every 15 20 years to account for changing conditions over time
- Designed to make broad over-arching decisions for the entire resource area for resources and resource uses
- Discloses resource and resource use conditions, impacts and mitigation through a set of alternatives that present different scenarios for land management
- Triggers inventories and other data collection to inform the analysis

LWC in the RMP Process

- An analyzed resource in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
 - Each Alternative contains a suite of management decisions that may or may not differ from another alternative
 - CFO Total of 7 LWC units that vary across alternatives

Alternative Decisions Criteria for LWCs

- Does LWC management lend itself to protecting the watershed health of the alternative?
- Based on inventory information, which units are within or in close proximity to the citizen submitted inventories?
- What units are not encumbered by oil and gas leases, or if leased, the lease is already stipulated No Surface Occupancy (NSO)?
- Which units are adjacent to existing WSAs or adjacent wilderness and are not encumbered by an oil and gas lease?

Potential Management for LWCs (per BLM Manual 6320)

- "An alternative that protects lands with wilderness characteristics must contain management action to achieve protection" Examples include:
 - Recommend withdrawal from mineral entry
 - Close to leasing or allow leasing only with no surface occupancy with no exceptions, waivers, or modifications
 - Designate as right-of-way exclusion areas
 - Close to construction of new roads
 - Designate as closed to motor vehicle use, as limited to motor vehicle use on designated routes, or as limited to mechanized use on designated routes
 - Close to mineral material sales
 - Exclude or restrict with conditions for certain commercial uses or other activities (e.g., commercial or personal-use wood-cutting permits)
 - Designate as Visual Resource Management Class I or II
 - Restrict construction of new structures and facilities unrelated to the preservation or enhancement of wilderness characteristics or necessary for the management of uses allowed under the land use plan

Planning Process Results/Outcomes

- RMP, once finalized, will result in one of the following:
 - Emphasizing other multiple uses as a priority over protecting wilderness characteristics
 - Emphasizing other multiple uses while applying management restrictions (conditions of use, mitigation measures) to reduce impacts to wilderness characteristics
 - Protection of wilderness characteristics as a priority over other multiple uses

Next Steps in RMP, EIS Process

Completed

- Public Scoping (Summer 2010)
- Alternatives Development
- Hosting informational workshops including today's LWC Unit Inventories
- EIS Affected Environment, Chp. 3

Upcoming

- EIS Impacts to the Affected Environment, Chp. 4
- Publish Draft EIS for 90 day public comment
 - Targeted for end of first quarter FY 2015
- Host series of public comment meetings during 90-day comment period
- Select preferred alternative and publish Final EIS
- Implement RMP

TASK	SCHEDULED DATE	
PUBLIC SCOPING		
Publish NOI	June 10, 2010	
Public Scoping Meetings	July 2010	
Public Scoping Period Ends	August 30, 2010	
Publish Scoping Report	May 13, 2011	
DRAFT RMPR/EIS		
Alternatives Development and Prepare Draft RMP/EIS	2012-2015	
Complete Draft EIS	October 2014	
Publish NOA, Begin Public Review (90-day Public Comment Period)	November/December 2014	
Public Meetings	November/December 2014- January/February 2015	
End Public Review Period	February/March 2015	

FINAL RMPR/EIS	
Complete Proposed RMP/Final EIS	October 2015
Begin Governor's 60-day Review Period	November 2015
Send NOA to Federal Register, Begin 30- day Public Review Period	November 2015
End Public Review Period	December 2015
End Governor's Review Period and Public Review Period	January 2016
Resolve Protests	February 2016
Final RMP and ROD to Public	March 2016